

Officials to decide if creek eligible for 'superfund'

By M.I. BLACKWELL
Of the News-Democrat
CAHOKIA — Environmental officials are expected to meet later this week to determine if Dead Creek would be eligible for federal cleanup assistance through a recently created "superfund."
The \$1.6 billion "superfund" is designed to make money available for cleanup of hazardous waste sites throughout the country. The bill creating the fund was passed by Congress last week and is awaiting President Carter's signature. Carter is expected to sign the bill.
Federal Environmental Protection

Agency officials also are expected to meet soon to review data compiled by the state Environmental Protection Agency on the contaminated area to assist in the federal officials' analysis of the situation.
State officials are hoping to have Dead Creek placed on the "superfund" list.
"If we can prove there is an imminent hazard to a navigable waterway, it would make it eligible for immediate federal assistance," said Geoff Langley, an IEPA emergency response specialist. "It's still too early to know but it would appear Dead Creek may be eligible at some point down the road for some type of assistance."

Langley said the chances of getting federal assistance are an "excellent probability" and the superfund "would be more applicable for Dead Creek. It would greatly assist us in the cleanup."
The state's hazardous waste fund doesn't have enough money — \$75,000 — to adequately clean the area. The cost of cleaning Dead Creek has been estimated to be more than \$1 million.
He said the federal government would probably formulate a priority list of the hazardous dump sites around the nation that would be eligible for cleanup funds. "Superfund" money may be distributed on a regional basis, Langley said.

Federal officials could not be reached for comment.
The creek, a dry old drainage ditch, meanders through a north Cahokia residential area before emptying into the Mississippi River, about seven miles from the creek's source in Sauget.
A one-half mile, 30 feet wide quarantined area, near Illinois 3 bounded by Queens Avenue in Sauget and Judith Lane in Cahokia, has been found to have dangerously high levels of toxic chemicals saturated in the soil with some seeping into

the groundwater. Found in the creek's bed were polychlorinated biphenyls or PCBs, phosphorus, and 20 toxic chemicals. State officials suspect a waste hauler dumped the waste in the creek, possibly years ago.
Since the state has found the groundwater to contain two health-threatening chemicals — chlorinated benzenes and chlorophenols — the area may qualify under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, Langley said. The act has a revolving pollution fund that is used for cleanup of oil spills and selected hazardous waste materials, he said.

The cleanup, in this case, would simply be a "containment measure" to prevent contaminated groundwater from reaching surface water, Langley said.
Meanwhile, state EPA officials are continuing to analyze the remaining soil and water samples taken from the area in October. Those results are a part of Phase Two, which would determine the extent of the soil and water contamination in the area. They may be known in a month.
"We're getting a good picture on the extent of the contamination," Langley said.

Dead Creek evaluated by EPA officials for clean-up assistance

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By LORI AMEND
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CAHOKIA — While persons in Washington were talking Thursday about the \$1.6 billion superfund signed into law that day by President Jimmy Carter, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency officials were evaluating Dead Creek in Cahokia to see if it would qualify for federal clean-up assistance.
And although a decision on which hazardous waste sites will qualify for the superfund is a long way off, John Renkes, IEPA emergency response unit supervisor, said U.S. EPA officials told him the site appeared to be a candidate for the program.
Tony Rutter of the U.S. EPA office was on a field assignment this morning and could not be reached for comment.
Renkes toured the site with Rutter Thursday afternoon. In addition to consideration for clean-up funds, he said the waste dump was evaluated for possible methods of cleanup.
IEPA up to this point has been determining the extent of the contamination. He said federal officials agreed that the problem is contained in the three quarters of a mile stretch between Queens Avenue in

Sauget and Judith Lane in Cahokia that has been fenced off.
No disposal determinations were made during the inspection, Renkes said. But among the alternatives that will be considered by both agencies is excavating the site to dispose of the materials or entombing the waste at the site.
"To dig into it may cause more contamination," Renkes said. The entombment option would seal the materials in clay and the site would be continually monitored by EPA to ensure no leakage occurred.
High concentrations of 20 toxic metals and polychlorinated biphenyls, or PCBs, were found in the ditch this summer.
In addition to superfund, the site has been considered for clean-up money under the federal water pollution control act, called the revolving pollution fund.
The U.S. Coast Guard, which administers the fund, declared the site ineligible earlier this year because the situation had not threatened surface water.
Chlorinated benzene and chlorophenols, two toxic chemicals, were found in ground water near the ditch in November. Geoff Langley, of IEPA's emergency response unit, said the possibility remains that

surface water could become contaminated, but there was "no imminent threat to water at that time."
Reed Neuman, assistant attorney general in the environmental control division, said that the state will continue to pursue leads on who was responsible for the dump.
"We're not going to sit around saying we'll play our ace in the hole," Neuman said of the possibility of federal assistance.
Even if Dead Creek is placed on a list of candidates for the federal assistance program, it's "not a guarantee of anything," Neuman said.
Dead Creek could turn out to be relatively insignificant when compared with other hazardous waste problems throughout the nation, he said.
Neuman said the agency is "doing a lot of digging" and believes it can identify persons responsible for about 10 to 20 percent of the waste.
"We're dealing with a lot of people who contributed to the situation," he said. But he said legal action would not be started until more persons who were involved are identified.
Total cost of cleanup has been estimated at more than \$1 million.

Tests find wells near Dead Creek uncontaminated

2/91 By M.I. BLACKWELL
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CAHOKIA — Wells in the Dead Creek area have been found to be uncontaminated, according to the latest tests results by the state.
The results, released this week, help determine the extent of contamination from the creek. The testing was begun in late September by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.
At 11 near the creek were sampled and

found to be uncontaminated. A drainage cut between the creek and a pond on the eastern border of the creek contained high levels of metals.
James Kelly, a chemist for the IEPA, said the results "are pretty much what we expected it to be."
In addition to the water well results, the recently completed tests also showed the following:
• The most severe contamination is primarily confined to the creek's bed

between Queens Avenue in Sauget and Judith Lane in Cahokia. Previous test results showed various levels of contamination along the creek's banks, some three blocks south of Judith Lane.
Test on the creek's north end near Queens Avenue, about 80 yards from the street, discovered 17,000 parts per million of polychlorinated biphenyls. The acceptable level is 50 parts per million. Lower concentrations of PCBs, suspected of causing cancer, were found toward the

creek's southern end.
• There was no additional movement of contaminants in the groundwater or soil near the creek. Two toxic chemicals, chlorinated benzenes and chlorophenols, were found in the groundwater in November.
• Air samples were negative only when the soils remained undisturbed. When the soils are disturbed, "potentially harmful vapors are released," IEPA officials warn.
Kelly said the state will periodically

monitored the dozen groundwater wells that were sunk for movement of the contaminants. There was a "very small movement" of the contaminants, he said.
Now the extensive test results are completed, the information will be used to determine the type and extent of cleanup needed at the creek, Kelly said. State officials are still unsure how much cleanup costs will be, but estimates have gone above \$1 million.
Kelly said the state will work closely with

the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in finding money for the cleanup.
Dead Creek was first found to have high concentrations of chemical contamination in September. Tests were made after a resident constantly complained that the creek, a former drainage ditch, smelted in hot weather. He said his dog died after rolling in the creek.
After additional tests confirmed higher levels of contamination, a 4-foot high snow fence was erected around the creek.